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HSCA Interview w/ Joseph Piccolo, 11 August 1978

On August 11, 1978 at 2:00 p.m. Dan Hardway and Charles Berk of the HSCA conducted a two hour interview with Joseph Piccolo, Jr. Mr. Piccolo, <sup>age 43,</sup> is presently an employee of the CIA working as an operations officer in the DDO. He joined the CIA in February 1957, and, except for one year of duty with the Air Force ~~THREE YEARS~~ he continued in his employment with the CIA.

Prior to the beginning of the interview Mr. Piccolo was asked to examine the CIA's omnibus release letter of March 23, 1978. After his examination, Mr. Piccolo indicated that he fully understood the letter's meaning. Mr. Berk then explained to Mr. Piccolo the mandate and purpose of the HSCA.

Mr. Piccolo stated that at the time of JFK's assassination he was a support assistance analyst in the DDO. His responsibilities included maintenance of records, running of traces, and

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Spanish language analysis for purposes of operational support. Subsequent to this position, Mr. Piccolo undertook training during the Spring of 1964 to become an operations officer. Mr. Piccolo further stated that his professional areas of interest were mainly ~~concerned~~ Latin America. He also indicated that he served at [the] [CIA's] Mexico City Station from December 1957 - January 1960 and from August 1965 to January 1968. It was further ascertained that Mr. Piccolo was involved in some Agency operations directed against Cuba during the time periods 1962 - January 1968 ~~1969~~, January 1969 - Jan 1970 and for a 3 month period during 1975. Mr. Piccolo was asked if he was familiar with the cryptonym <sup>CIA/H</sup> AMMUS/1. He responded affirmatively and stated that A/H was the first COIS defector from the ~~the~~ newly formed DSI, the CIA's Cuban counterpart for external security and counter-intelligence operations.

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Mr. Piccolo stated that he did not participate in the initial handling and debriefing of A/I but became involved in the case during the summer of 1964 when he first met A/I. At that time, Mr. Piccolo was assigned to "handle" A/I, i.e., to ensure that A/I was properly accommodated and to provide companionship for A/I. \* (over) late

Mr. Piccolo [REDACTED] became responsible for debriefing A/I. Mr. Piccolo was not able to recall the exact time period during which he debriefed A/I but believed he debriefed A/I for approximately a four to six month period. Mr. Piccolo stated that [Harold Swenson] Barney Hidalgo and Dan Flores also debriefed A/I. [REDACTED]

Mr. Piccolo was queried as to the responsibilities of W/H/SAT/4, the C/A component responsible for the A/I case. He indicated that this component [debriefed w/ Harold Swenson] worked against the Cuban Intelligence Services. He further indicated that

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DMX

M. Puccolo recalled that A/J had been debriefed <sup>in Canada</sup> after his defection. He stated that the objectives of the initial debriefings would have been to gain biographic data on persons associated with the Cuban intelligence service and information on persons who might collaborate with the CIA. [REDACTED]

As for the filing of the debriefing reports, Mr. Piccolo said the filing procedure would have been dictated by the manner in which the case was handled i.e. by subject or cryptonym or personality. He did state that debriefing reports would have initially been held in the office handling the case. These reports would have been "held tight" to allow time for operations to be developed ~~ASSISTS~~ ~~but~~ ~~intelligence~~ while security risks are at a minimum. ~~When~~ ~~where~~ such reports would now be located Mr. Piccolo said he did not know. Piccolo indicated that

WH/SAS/C, to carry out its functions  
may have run double agent  
operations

Mr. Piccolo was next queried  
whether he recalled a CIA  
component referred to as the  
"domestic exploitation section".

Mr. Piccolo stated that this  
terminology was not familiar  
to him but that domestic  
exploitation would most likely  
have been located in a positive  
intelligence section of the Agency  
such as the Domestic Contacts  
Division. He ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup> ~~had~~ stated  
that recruitment of personnel  
in the country for ~~██████████~~

utilization in foreign opera-  
tions would have been  
the responsibility of every  
operations officer. He ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup> ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup>  
doubts that the Western Hemisphere  
Division would have run such an  
office but that operational  
recruitment would have been  
handled as part of a specific  
project or program.

Mr. Piccolo was queried  
whether A/I provided any  
information to the CIA on the

Hawey Oswald and his possible contacts with the DSI. He responded that he recalls no A/I debriefing reports providing such information nor did A/I provide such information to him. Mr.

Hedalgo further declared that Morris [Swanson] Hedalgo, and Flores never indicated to him that A/I had ever provided any information on Lee Hawey Oswald.

Mr. Piccolo was next queried as to the meaning of the term "Special Intelligence". He indicated that the term usually applies to the interception of communication e.g. signal intelligence which would include radio waves and radar but would not include electronic surveillance. Mr. Piccolo stated that Special Intelligence would have been handled by "Dwaramd", a special unit segregated from other Agency components.

Mr. Piccolo was next asked if he had ever seen any photographs of Lee Harvey Oswald resulting from the photographic surveillance operation conducted by the CIA Mexico City station. He responded in the affirmative stating that he saw 2 photographs of LHO after entering a lawn (the Cuban Embassy/Consulate in Mexico City). The first photograph was a <sup>3 1/2</sup> full shot of LHO exposing his left profile as LHO looks downward. The second photograph which Mr. Piccolo recollects seeing was a back <sup>bordering</sup> of the head view of LHO.

At this point in the interview Mr. Piccolo was shown WCE 237, the famous photo of the Mexico City Mystery Man! All printed identification ~~bordering~~ of the photograph were covered prior to Mr. Piccolo's examination.

Mr. Piccolo was then asked who the man in WCE 237 was. Mr. Piccolo responded that he did not know but that the

person was not Lee Harvey Oswald. Mr. Piccolo was next shown a ~~full frontal~~ <sup>head</sup> photograph of LHO. This photograph also had all printed material ~~blurred~~ blurring its surface covered. When asked ~~who~~ who the person in the photograph was, after a moment's pause, Mr. Piccolo <sup>correctly</sup> identified ~~as~~ Lee Harvey Oswald as the person in the photograph.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Mr. Piccolo explains the circumstances ~~in~~ under which he viewed the above-referenced photographs. He recalled that the photos were from the Mexico City Station surveillance operation but could not recall if he saw the photographs at HQs or in Mexico City. He indicated that he had previously heard "through the grape-vine" that such photographs had been found. He further stated that approximately 2-4 weeks prior to the date of this interview Mr.

[Dan Nescium] had told Mr. Peccole that Charlotte Bustos had found a photograph of LHO. Mr. Peccole assumed that [Mr. Nescium] had ~~been~~ <sup>the gal at the newspaper</sup> become aware of Ms. Bustos' discovery, through [Mr. Nescium's] research into the Oswald case.

Finally Mr. Peccole speculated that any photos from Mexico City surveillance operation would have been sent to head-quarters & that he presumed someone would have found the LHO photograph at head-quarters.

Mr. Peccole was next asked <sup>whether he is acquainted with</sup> ~~whether he is acquainted with~~ the following people (response indicated)

- 1) George Wetmore - no
- 2) Douglas Shipton - no
- 3) David Phillips yes
- 4) E. Edward Hunt yes, but not well
- 5) Maurice Bishop no
- 6) F. W. Crozier no
- 7) Antonio Veciana no
- 8) [Stanley <sup>03</sup> Watson] yes, <sup>Dept. of</sup> <sub>my</sub> <sup>Chancery</sup> <sub>legation</sub>
- 9) Claire Bonstra yes, <sup>in my</sup> <sub>legation</sub>
- 10) Silvia Duran no <sup>recollection</sup> <sub>Dept. of State</sub>

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- 11) Manuel Calvillo - no
- 12) Anne Goodpasture yes, (over)
- 13) LIR 106/3 - yes, but can recall no more
- 14) Mr. Scott - yes; Mr. Piccolo was queried whether Mr. Scott maintained a personal safe in Mexico City while he was Chief of Station there. Mr. Piccolo responded that restricted materials would have been kept in a safe. Mr. Piccolo ~~as~~ defined restricted materials as being very sensitive, ~~and~~ i.e. not finding it way not routine file. Mr. Piccolo stated that he does not know who would have had access to such a safe.

~~Mr. Piccolo was next shown a 1/1 DeRifkin report dated 18/3/64 concerning the debriefing of DGI officers in the U.S. regarding visa appli-~~

12) knew her as Wm Scott's assistant - she might have found the LHO photographs

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Mr. Piccolo was next asked if he could identify the function of the CIA component C/1/S16. He responded that it was his belief that C/1/S16 dealt w/ ciphers because the designation seem to imply it was a Special Intelligence Group or a Signal Intelligence Group.

At this point in the interview Mr. Piccolo was asked to examine a 5 May 1964 CIA declassification report of A/I regarding A/I's knowledge of LHO's possible contacts with the DSI. Mr. Piccolo stated that he does not recall ever seeing the ~~memorandum~~ of the information contained in it. He had no recollection of Rogelio Rodriguez, Luisa Calderon, and his recollection of Manuel Vega was poor.

Mr. Piccolo was next asked to examine a 7 May 64 CIA memorandum prepared by [Harold Swanson] which elaborate on A/I's knowledge of LHO and the JFK assassination.

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XH

Mr. Piccolo was standard of A/1  
had ~~not~~ been denounced  
during his period 1964.  
in intelligence discussions  
with he did not see any group  
names and do not recall any  
names and do not recall any

Mr. Piccolo stated that he had never seen this memorandum and that it did not refresh his recollection regarding Luisa Calderon.

Mr. Piccolo was then asked if he could define a Black Tape 201 file. He stated that ~~such~~ such a file has been retired and is black taped to hide either an operational relationship or other sensitive matter.

This file is enveloped and sealed. He indicated that ~~such~~ a name trace stamp indicate if a file has been black taped. Moreover, he stated that it would be a very rare occurrence for an agent ~~file~~ to be maintained on a soft file basis.

Mr. Piccolo was next asked to examine C/A debrifing no. 65 of A/1 pertaining to the duties of a DSI officer in the field regarding visa applicants. Mr. Piccolo ~~did~~ not recall ~~ever~~ reviewing this report. He indicated that

The report appeared accurate. He further stated the DG1 used extensive consulate cover in its operations. Mr. Piccolo stated that he believed Eusebio Aguirre, former Cuban Consul in Mexico City, to have been a DG1 [redacted] officer.

Mr. Piccolo was queried concerning his knowledge of the designation 2R. Specifically, he was asked what significance the notation 2R [redacted] had when placed next to the names of DG1 officers Merabal & Vega as occurs in a 30 April 64 excerpt from CIA debriefing report of A/I. Piccolo stated that the 2R probably stood for 2R NICK, a project designed to identify clandestine Cuban intelligence network.

Mr. Piccolo next examined a 17 July 1964, CIA contact report written by himself. Mr. Piccolo verified his authorship of the contact report and further stated that the Cuban defector AMWIP/1 identified in the report had been a Cuban 6-2 agent.

who defected in 1962-1963. Mr. Piccolo further indicated that the photographs examined by A/1 and HMMW 1P/1, as reported in the contact report, probably originated with the ~~LION~~ <sup>surveillance</sup> ~~W~~ operation.

Mr. Piccolo next ~~was asked~~ asked to detail his knowledge of Teresa Proenza Proenza. He stated that she was related to the manager of ~~Cadena~~ <sup>Cadena</sup> ~~Unida~~ <sup>Unida</sup> in Mexico. He further declared that he had no knowledge that Proenza had ever been associated with the CIA but did admit that she had been of operational interest to the Agency. He did not know if she had been a target for recruitment by the CIA. However Mr. Piccolo declined to discuss further Ms Proenza's relationship with the CIA unless HSCA could ~~be~~ demonstrate the relevance of the questioning.

Finally, Mr. Piccolo was asked to examine CIA despatch HMMW-11935, 1 September 1963, regarding ~~Yusua~~ Calderon. Mr. Piccolo indicated that the

designation there of SAS/EOB  
represented Cuban Task Force/  
External Operations Branch.

EOB, he stated operated outside  
of Cuba. Furthermore, Mr. Piccolo  
stated that he knew the author  
of the dispatch, Dave Kornis, whom  
he stated had retired from the  
CIA.

Q Who would have handled special intelligence -

A Staff D or Division D

Q Was it FI staff

A No, it would have been a special group

~~HTLINSUL would have been separate  
from Division D - it was on C1 staff~~

In Mex - Aug 65 - Jan 68

(" 57 - 60)

60-65 } in HQ

was involved in B. Ops - oper '15 support  
at HQ

prepared names,  
arrest'd operational officers

Did not know George Witter

" " Grupton

Did not know Dave Phillips

" " Hunt but not well

Did not know Maurice Bishop

" Crozer

" McCiana

Did not know (Stanley Watson) Psychiat<sup>03</sup>,  
" " Boonstra - Dept. of State

Boonstra - Dept. of State

When in Mex was assigned to Cuban  
section of MACV Sta

He has heard that Mx 81 had

photo of LHO - after assas.

but saw copy of photo from MACV Sta

4/22/68  
4/23/68

✓ photo of LHQ entering or exiting  
Cuban Embassy was taken

✓ looking downward - left profile  
this was famous LHQ photo

✓ 3/4 fullshot

✓ saw 2 photos

✓ other was back of head

✓ says he saw photo of man 6'3'  
250 lbs, short hair - wouldn't

✓ know it wasn't LHQ

Knew Charlotte Bustos

✓ he heard before HSCA publicity  
that C.B had found a photo

✓ ran surveillance ops in Mex City

✓ helped the agent who ran the  
operation -  
was called LION/ON

[<sup>03</sup> Dan] ~~████████~~ - [<sup>03</sup> Niesciur]

✓ said Charlotte Bustos had found a  
photo

✓ assumed [<sup>03</sup> PW] found it through  
his research into the case

✓ Doesn't recall S. Dwan

✓ ~~████████~~ has heard Liring/3 but  
can't recall ~~████████~~ anything

✓ doesn't recall Manuel Calvillo

Dan asks again about LHO photo

✓ says picture he saw quite a few years

ago - was LHO going into Cuban

Embassy - wasn't Soviet

Embassy

"He got at Mexi desk found it"

Knew Ann Goodpasture - not positive

✓ but she might have found LHO

photo - knew her as Win Scott Hass -

no specific CI duties

but worked in this

area

Win Scott had a safe where

✓ stored materials

✓ best cos encountered in Agency

would have kept restricted materials

in the safe - very sensitive

stuff that

wouldn't find

it's way into

sensitive

files

✓ doesn't know

✓ who had access to safe

Walk in at Sov. Emb. would have

+ bus be getting quick visa if

not know or i'd do as CIA agent -

✓ would need proof of who you

are - if had valuable intelligence

material would be different,

for 2  
days  
visa would be  
worried  
about  
but, however,  
look out  
pre  
for

never heard of Mollabey mining Co.

for expedition<sup>105</sup>

visa  
to S. U.

member of CP

agent

person of interest to S. U.

" " to Block country

